

Virginia Council on Women

Minutes

Tuesday, September 15, 2020

Virtual Meeting

(Meeting held virtually due to COVID19.)

Members Present: Ashley Reynolds Marshall (Chair); Aisha Johnson (Secretary); Kelly Thomasson, Secretary of the Commonwealth (Ex-Officio Council Member); Heather Caputo; Nicole Carry; Margie Del Castillo; LaShawn Farmer; Courtney Hill; Da'Shaun Joseph; Marisol Morales-Diaz; Aesha Mehta; Kara Moran; Kelley Powell; Tara Roundtree; Michelle Strucke; and Brigitta Toruno

Staff Present: Traci J. DeShazor, Deputy Secretary of the Commonwealth (Staff Liaison); Dr. Janice Underwood, Chief Diversity Equity and Inclusion Officer; Suzanne Holland, Director of Women's Outreach; Melissa Assalone, Policy Advisor; **Mikaela Swann, ???**

Community Members Present: Lujean Babb, Virginia Tech

Pre-meeting Comments: Traci DeShazor, Deputy Secretary of the Commonwealth, gave pre-meeting comments regarding meeting etiquette and rules for virtual meetings.

Call to Order: Following her comments, Ms. DeShazor turned the meeting over to Chair Ashley Reynolds-Marshall. Ms. Reynolds-Marshall called the meeting to order at 1:10 p.m. Secretary Aisha Johnson held the roll call.

Agenda and Minutes: The May 20, 2020 meeting minutes were unanimously approved on a motion by Nicole Carry, seconded by Da'Shaun Joseph. The September 15, 2020 meeting agenda was unanimously approved on a motion by Brigitta Toruno, seconded by Michelle Strucke.

Public Comment: No public comments were submitted prior to the meeting.

Chair's Report: Ms. Reynolds-Marshall presented the Chair's Report. She thanked the outgoing members who include Olga Boucher, Amy Bridge, Caryn Foster Durham, Jill Gaitens, Carol Rick Gibbons, Chrystal Neal, Devin Pugh-Thomas, and Katie Tyson. Ms. Reynolds-Marshall welcomed the new members who include Heather Caputo, LaShawn Farmer, Courtney Hill, Alencia Johnson, Aesha Mehta, Marisol Morales-Diaz, Kara Moran, Kelley Powell, Tara Roundtree, and Brigitta Toruno. Ms. Reynolds-Marshall also

reminded the Council of plans to submit its first Executive Summary to Governor Ralph Northam's Office.

Administrative Update: Ms. DeShazor presented the Administrative Update. She announced that Danielle Campbell, former Special Assistant for Advisory Board Administration, is no longer with the Administration. Ms. DeShazor is working to hire a replacement. She also requested that Council Members send all correspondence to the e-mail women@governor.virginia.gov, and reminded Council Members that all e-mails must include no more than two Council Members. Ms. DeShazor also requested that new members no longer contact the Appointment Coordinator. The remainder of the update included notification that web site updates are underway. Previous meeting minutes and agendas are being reformatted. The update also included the onboarding of new Council Members, and encouraging Council Members to learn more about each other. Ms. DeShazor reminded the Council that previous members should be notified of Council sponsored events and called upon to serve as speakers for events. New members will also be asked to sign up for service on committees. The update concluded with the notification that a new Standard Operating Procedures document is forthcoming.

Outreach Update: Suzanne Holland presented the Outreach Update. She stated that August was Women's Suffrage Month. Activities included an *Into the Light* Campaign that was held statewide where prominent buildings were lit in purple, white, and gold (the colors of the Women's Suffrage Movement). The film *These Things Can Be Done*, a history of the Women's Suffrage Movement, was promoted. A virtual panel discussion was also held on the topic. Ms. Holland provided the link via the chat feature of the recorded panel discussion. To obtain that link, contact Ms. Holland at Suzanne.holland@governor.virginia.gov. The proclamation for the movement can be found at <https://www.governor.virginia.gov/constituent-services/>. Any Council Members who want a hard copy of the proclamation should e-mail Ms. Holland. Ms. Holland also stated that the newsletter was sent the day of the Council meeting and features upcoming events, which were also shared over the chat feature by Ms. DeShazor. Marisol Morales-Diaz inquired via the chat feature where the newsletter can be accessed. Ms. Reynolds-Marshall shared the link via chat, <https://www.governor.virginia.gov/constitueant-services/>. Heather Caputo inquired over chat which e-mail address the newsletter is sent from. Ms. Holland responded via chat that the newsletter originates from her e-mail. Council Members should contact Ms. Holland by e-mail to receive the newsletter by e-mail. A community updates link is also located on the

Council's web site. Nicole Carry reminded the Council via the chat feature that Women's Military Week is in March.

Administration Update: Commonwealth: Kelly Thomasson presented the Administration Update. She welcomed the new members appointed to the Council, and stated that a goal of her office is to have strong female voices represented on all appointed boards and promote diversity in membership of all appointed boards. Council Members can provide recommendations for the various boards. Ms. Thomasson reminded Council Members to complete the Census and encouraged Council Members to remind their networks to complete the Census. Courtney Hill asked via the chat feature the rates of response throughout the Commonwealth. Ms. Holland sent the link to the Census response rate via chat, <https://2020census.gov/en/response-rates/self-response.html>. (The response rate in Virginia at the time of the meeting was 80%.) Ms. Morales-Diaz asked if Census takers were going door to door. Census takers were going door to door at the time of the meeting. Michelle Strucke thanked Ms. Thomasson via chat for extending the Commission to Examine Racial Inequity in Virginia Law. She also shared the press release, <https://www.governor.virginia.gov/newsroom/all-releases/2020/june/headline-857947-en.html>, and asked if the Commission is examining dimensions of gender inequality, or if similar efforts exist around gender inequality in laws in the Commonwealth. (If a response was given, I didn't capture it.) The update concluded with Ms. Thomasson stating that the minority response rate to the Census is low, and citizens are encouraged to respond as soon as possible, as the deadline to respond is fluid.

Policy Update: Healthcare: Catie Finley, Melissa Assalone, Rachel Becker, and Dr. Lisa Jobe-Shields presented the COVID-19 and Maternal Health, and Mental and Behavioral Health Update. The Council was informed that Gena Berger, the former Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Resources and Director of Women's Outreach, has moved on to another position. She was thanked for her service to the Commonwealth. Ms. Finley reported that at the time of the meeting the Commonwealth had more than 127,000 COVID-19 positive cases and approximately 2,500 deaths. The COVID Wise Application is available and at the time of the meeting had almost 500,000 downloads. The application has Bluetooth technology that does not record users' personal information. Ms. Finley also reported that on September 10, 2020 restrictions in the Hampton Roads area were eased due to declining cases, and Hampton Roads entered Phase 3. Local Health Departments have been given additional resources for increased testing. Suzanne Holland gave information using the chat feature to the demographic dashboard for

COVID-19 positive cases, <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/coronavirus/covid-19-in-virginia-demographics/>. Community testing events are focused on vulnerable populations. The Pandemic Dashboard is being launched and citizens are encouraged to get flu shots.

Ms. Finley reported on Medicaid efforts to allow patients to receive post partum care up to 60 days after birth, allow patients to receive home visits, and conduct a Doula study. On July 1, 2020, the Reproductive Health Protection Act took effect. The Act repeals what has been referred to as medically unnecessary restrictions on women's healthcare. Virginia's mandatory ultrasound law and 24-hour waiting period prior to an abortion were repealed. The bill also rolled back restrictions on women's health centers. Ms. Hill inquired about the ethnic makeup of the Virginia Medicaid Doula Workgroup. Ms. DeShazor responded that the Workgroup includes representatives from the Motherhood Collective, Birth in Color, and Urban Baby Beginnings. Ms. Finley reported that The Virginia Department of Health Doula certification Workgroup is creating a process for the state certification of Doulas, allowing Doulas to be reimbursed by Medicaid. The Workgroup includes representatives from the Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS), the Virginia Department of Health, and the Department of Health Professions, as well as representatives from community Doula practitioners, stakeholder groups, and community organizations. Ms. Strucke inquired whether the Council can preview the report recommendations. Ms. DeShazor stated that the review of recommendations by the Council will be allowed. Ms. Reynolds-Marshall inquired via the chat feature if socioeconomic data is being collected when reviewing maternal health. Ms. Finley responded that DMAS is addressing the social determinants of health in maternal healthcare. Ms. Becker stated that the Virginia Maternal Health Epidemiologist is also tracking maternal health data and attempting to determine if the data includes age, race, and religion. Ms. Becker stated that the Maternal Health Strategic Plan is scheduled to be released in October and will be located on-line at <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov>.

Dr. Lisa Jobe-Shields reported on Mental and Behavioral Health efforts. She reported that a large scale initiative is being reviewed which includes three priority programs; mental health, substance abuse, and suicide crisis. The program STEP-VA has been created, "To increase access, quality, consistency, and accountability in the public mental health system." (<http://www.crisisnow.com>) The vision is to, "Implement a fully-integrated behavioral health services that provide a full continuum of care to Medicaid members. This comprehensive system will focus on access to services that

are: high quality, evidence-based, trauma-informed, and cost-effective.” (<http://www.crisisnow.com>) Six priorities exist for behavioral health enhancements. The services currently exist and are licensed in Virginia, but are not covered by Medicaid or adequately funded through Medicaid. Crisis services are being studied to respond to crises where they occur. Proposed plans include regional or statewide crisis call hubs, mobile crisis outreach teams to respond to crises at the locations of the crises, and facilities that take all people regardless of time of day or crisis being experienced. Licensed clinicians can conduct phone assessments at the call hubs. Ms. Reynolds-Marshall asked via chat if there are limitations surrounding the 24/7 mobile crisis program, i.e. does the crisis have to be at a certain level to access services, and whether trained peers could be used in the phone bank. Dr. Jobe-Shields stated that the call hubs would be available for caller-identified crises before a crisis occurs. She also stated that peer counselors can be used in the phone bank. Ms. Strucke asked via chat for the timeline for the implementation of the mobile response team and if it will be piloted in a certain parts of Virginia or implemented across the Commonwealth. Plans call for funding to CSB’s, building hubs, opening call centers by July 2021, and standing up a national suicide prevention line by July 2022. Ms. Toruno requested via the chat feature for a web site detailing the program. The site is <http://www.crisisnow.com>. The site for the current REACH Program was also provided, <http://www.dbhds.virginia.gov/developmental-services/Crisis-services>. “The REACH program is the statewide crisis system of care that is designed to meet the crisis support needs of individuals who have a developmental disability and are experiencing crisis events which put them at risk for homelessness, incarceration, hospitalization, and/or danger to self or others. REACH services are available statewide, with one regional program being located in each of the Commonwealth’s five DD regions (Southwestern, Western, Northern, Central, and Eastern).” (<http://www.dbhds.virginia.gov/developmental-services/Crisis-services>)

Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Update: Dr. Janice Underwood presented an update on the activity of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The office reached out to 60 local governments to advance health equity. Data was used to target localities with large at risk populations to offer PPE for distribution to citizens. The localities will be listed on the Governor’s web site. A Health District Guidebook has been created. Residents have given feedback that not all agencies are helpful or welcoming for people experiencing financial hardships. The One Virginia Plan will be available on the Governor’s web site. The schedule for posting of the plan is

the end of September/beginning of October. The plan is a toolkit for public and private sector organizations to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion. The localities offered PPE and the One Virginia Plan will be available at <https://www.governor.virginia.gov/diversity/>. Ms. Strucke asked via the chat feature if the Council can amplify the equity, inclusion, and diversity efforts. Council Members can use their networks to distribute information. Council Members can provide feedback for the One Virginia Plan.

Northam Administration: The Final Year: Ms. DeShazor presented the plan for the Women's Council during the final year of Governor Ralph Northam's administration. STEM, healthcare, and community engagement/women's summit have been the key initiatives of the Council. Ms. DeShazor asked the following questions of the Council: What do you want your legacy to be? How do we amplify your work? What will the Council's priorities be? How will you engage the community? Ms. DeShazor reminded the Council when answering these questions to remember their goals. Margie Del Castillo supported the ideas of a public survey to determine needs. The following question was asked: What will recognition months look like? Ms. Reynolds-Marshall inquired about proclamations for recognition months. Ms. Holland shared that proclamations for recognition months can be requested each year. The form is located at <https://www.governor.virginia.gov/constituent-services/request-a-proclamation/>. Ms. Joseph shared the idea of women's history walks and boot camps. Ms. Hill suggested via the chat feature that the Council partner with black women student groups at HBCU's regarding STEM, maternal health, and Women's History Month programming. These partnerships would also help to recruit women to the Council and other boards and commissions appointed by the Governor's Office. Ms. DeShazor informed the Council that a Women's History Month event has not been planned. Ms. Strucke suggested via the chat feature that the Council host an event on gender inequality in the broad sense. Ideas included utilizing researchers in Virginia, organizations working to close the gap, and/or distributing a survey that will seek efforts to close the gender gap and taking those recommendations to the Governor's Office. Ms. Del Castillo suggested via the chat feature that the Council be intentional about having a racial justice lens on any gender inequality work. Ms. Alencia Johnson asked via the chat feature whether the Council is considering how to help formerly incarcerated women, connecting to communities through re-entry resources. Ms. Hill asked via the chat feature if the Council has considered working with Lily Branch Kennedy in Richmond regarding assistance to formerly incarcerated women. Ms. Reynolds-Marshall suggested via the chat feature focusing on the gender wealth gap, racial wealth gap, glass ceiling, concrete

ceilings, and the glass cliff. Ms. Carry suggested via the chat feature identifying the Council's core goals in line with Dr. Underwood. Council representatives will meet with the Governor's Office on October 27, 2020 to discuss the executive summary. Ms. Caputo asked who would draft the executive summary. Ms. DeShazor shared via the chat feature the links to the African American Advisory Board and Latino Advisory Board reports. She suggested via the chat feature that Council Members provide input on the executive summary through their committee meetings and as the report is circulated through the Council.

Committee Reports and Discussion: Looking Back: Ms. Reynolds-Marshall requested that Council Members send Healthcare and Community Engagement Committee information directly to her. Ms. Reynolds-Marshall and Ms. Joseph gave the STEM Committee report. Winners have been selected, but the program has been paused due to COVID-19 and funding. An application has been submitted to a potential funder to provide \$10,000. Ms. DeShazor stated that current and past winners can be located on the Council's web site.

Ms. Strucke gave the Healthcare Committee Report. She requested the Council Members send her information, in addition to Ms. Reynolds-Marshall, related to the Healthcare Committee. Ms. Strucke stated that the Committee focus will be maternal mortality, and ideas for Committee activities are being accepted. She is also taking recommendations on drafting the healthcare portion of the executive summary.

Ms. Aisha Johnson gave the Community Engagement Committee Report. She gave an update on meetings with the Virginia Tech Women's Caucus. Plans call for a virtual summit for approximately 300 participants using the University's virtual meeting platforms. The focus would be women finding and elevating their voices. Ms. DeShazor gave a history of the Council's efforts to hold summits and partner with other agencies to offer summits. The question was asked whether Senator Mark Warner's Office will hold a summit this fall. (Update: Senator Warner's Office was contacted and stated that a summit will not be provided this fall.) Speaker choices and confirmation are needed for a virtual summit in partnership with VT. Concern from Council Members was expressed that the timing for an October summit does not give a lot of time for adequate planning and potential participants may be more focused on the fall elections. Ms. Aisha Johnson agreed to contact representatives of the Virginia Tech Women's Caucus to determine whether they would agree to moving a summit to after the first of the year.

The meeting adjourned at 4:53 p.m. with unanimous approval on a motion made by Ms. Joseph and seconded by Ms. Powell.